

Fit to Judge

by Lavina Diamanti

We talk constantly about the dogs we judge being fit for purpose, sound and able to do the job they were bred for but what about our judges? Do we ever consider when we are contracting our panel of judges that they are fit for purpose or more importantly, do we ask this of ourselves when accepting a judging appointment?

As the show regulations allow for a judge to be allocated a maximum of 250 dogs per day then it is reasonable to expect that our judges can judge this number. (Other countries vary depending on their regulations and whether critiquing is required.) It follows, therefore, that we can reasonably expect that the judges we contract are sufficiently fit to do a full workload and can maintain concentration during the assignment.

In addition to this we need to consider the travel to and from the show location, some airports are huge and passengers are required to walk quite a distance just to exit the terminal. Do we consider these points when we are accepting appointments or as club secretaries, contracting our judges?

The dog world is run principally by volunteers. These volunteers generally don't have the inside knowledge of what is happening in the private lives of the judges they contract. Sometimes, they choose their judges based on a profile, a photo, or a recommendation from someone whose dog they judged a few years ago. They don't and can't be expected to know if the profile photo is recent or seriously outdated, or if their health dictates that they are able to complete a full days judging.

Too often clubs find out too late that the judge they have contracted will struggle with the workload allocated to them or worse still, they are having to deal with judges having mobility difficulties and more. Not only is this unfair on the exhibitors it can create serious issues for the club and the running of the show not to mention the reputation of the judge.

The subject of judges being fit to complete assignments has been debated on several occasions at Judges Conferences. In response to this, 2 years ago NZDJA introduced the Practicing Certificate. The Judges Panel on the NZDJA Website identifies those holding current practicing certificates. To qualify a judge needs to be actively involved with judging activities and accumulate 50 credit points as defined in the Judges Regulations. Qualifying activities include acting as a show manager, attending judging seminars, hosting kennel visits, etc, plus of course, judging at Championship shows. When choosing these judges, clubs know that they are contracting a judge who is currently (or has recently) been involved in judging activities.

So what are our responsibilities as judges? Mostly this is unwritten. But I think we would all agree on the following points.

1. That we are physically fit enough to judge the maximum number of dogs we could be allocated, which in NZ is 250 per day.
2. That we have the mental capacity to concentrate on the task at hand and give every exhibitor fair and equal consideration.
3. That we can recall the relevant points of the breed standards when judging.
4. That our online profile is honest and relevant.
5. That we are honest with clubs and advise them before accepting the appointment if we have any health concerns that may mean we are unable to complete a full work load.
6. That we look out for our fellow judges and if they are struggling, support them with their transition to retirement.
7. None of us are immune from health issues and accidents and sometimes things happen that were never anticipated at the time of accepting the contract. If you do not think you will be fit enough, preserve your reputation and let the club know as soon as you are able to so they can make alternative arrangements.

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Important Dates

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| 23 June | Annual Conference |
| 20 July | Practical Examinations – Auckland |
| 13 July | Practical Examinations – Christchurch |